

# The Literature Major

Literature embodies a vision of life. For those who wish to explore the perennial themes of human experience, the study of literature is an essential part of an education. The University faculty holds that a close reading of great literary works imparts wisdom and is one of the modes of perceiving truth; that literature is best understood not only in relation to theology, philosophy, and history, but also as synthesizing and ordering the insights of these modes of knowledge. Literary study's special interest in perspective, form, tone, nuance, setting, wit, and irony goes far in shaping a subtle intelligence that appreciates the complexity and fulsomeness of human experience.

The University courses in literature introduce students to the classics of the West so that they may better understand themselves and their world by reading what the best authors have thought about the most important questions—questions about human purpose, the relationship between God and the human person and between man and woman, the foundations of knowledge, and the basis of human community. Thus, in the core classes we read the most ambitious and comprehensive authors—Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare; we listen in on the great conversation between them. The courses in the major sequence build upon this base, as we continue to study the classics of the Western literary tradition, but students also take classes organized around specific periods, genres, and authors so that they acquire a deeper knowledge of historical development, literary form, and a single great mind's full vision. In addition, courses in the major introduce students to the most important authors of English and American literature.

Literature majors take eleven courses as described below, providing them with a depth and range of understanding of Western literature that gives them the ability to make serious and well-informed judgments about primary and, to a lesser degree, secondary works.

Every student seeking to complete a major in Literature must pass a comprehensive examination. The student will take the test at the beginning of the spring semester of his senior year and will have the opportunity to re-take the test until he passes. Students will be tested over their knowledge of the Western literary tradition including English and American lyric poetry, literary periods, and the development of the novel, and in their ability to analyze poetry. Questions will be drawn from works they have read in the Core and the major courses.

## Core Courses

LITR 103 Literary Tradition I  
LITR 104 Literary Tradition II

## Required Major Courses

LITR 205 Medieval Literature  
LITR 206 Shakespeare  
LITR 307 Early Modern Literature  
LITR 309 Romanticism  
LITR 310 The Novel  
LITR 411 American Literature  
LITR 412 Twentieth Century Literature  
LITR 490 Senior Seminar: Literary Theory

**Elective Major Courses (one required)**

LITR 415 Special Topics

**Minor in Literature**

The minor in Literature allows students majoring in another discipline to develop a concentration in Literature. In addition to the two core literature courses, students must complete four other literature courses of their choice.

**Course Descriptions**

LITR 103 and LITR 104 are necessary prerequisites for upper level courses in literature.

**LITR 100 INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH COMPOSITION**

This course aims to strengthen and improve student writers through a twofold emphasis. First, the course will begin with a substantive yet accessible refresher of standard formal English grammar, syntax, and punctuation. Second, we will proceed to a rhetorical study of effective essay writing principles. Thus, LITR 100 aims to help students improve at two levels: writing clear, succinct, and graceful individual sentences and writing logical, ordered, and effective essays. We will also closely study the art of revising, so that students come to understand writing as a recursive habit instead of a one-time event (zero credit, pass/fail. Students who fail LITR 100 must retake and pass the course; a failure in LITR 100 results in an automatic failure in the corresponding Literary Tradition course).

**LITR 103 LITERARY TRADITION I**

This course will introduce students to the foundational epics of the West, Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, and Virgil's Aeneid. These works involve worlds of strife wherein the hero must find his correct relation to family, nation, and the divine through agon and quest. Aeschylus' Oresteia or Sophocles' Oedipus Rex will present the same struggles in a more compressed world, where fate and human responsibility are intricately examined. Throughout the semester, a special emphasis is placed upon composition in light of classical rhetoric.

**LITR 104 LITERARY TRADITION II**

A continuation of 103 in which many of the same themes are re-examined in light of later Christian and modern concerns. Readings are from major works of the medieval, Renaissance, and Modern periods, and shall include Beowulf, Dante's Divine Comedy, Shakespeare's plays or verse, Milton's Paradise Lost, and some modern narrative.

**LITR 205 MEDIEVAL LITERATURE**

The object of the course is to familiarize students with the intellectual culture of the Middle Ages as expressed through the literature, visual arts, and philosophical considerations of the times.

**LITR 206 SHAKESPEARE**

This course studies the plays and poems of possibly the most significant poet of the English language. The class may consider Shakespeare from a variety of perspectives, including the influence of medieval dramas; Renaissance humanism and Reformation controversy; or Shakespeare's contribution to psychological realism and the development of a modern consciousness.

## 🌀 Literature

### LITR 307 EARLY MODERN LITERATURE

This course will focus on the lyrical modes of English poetry from the Early Modern period. Attention will be given to the study of meter, scansion, syntax and identifying figures of speech. The careful examination of lyric poetry will culminate in a research paper on an exemplary poem from a single poet, including an oral examination by members of the faculty. The purpose of the course is to develop an ability to discuss matters of style, theme, technique, and literary criticism, as well as prepare students for writing the senior thesis.

### LITR 309 ROMANTICISM

The study of the poets of the Romantic era and their Victorian successors. Topics may include Romanticism as a reaction against and development of the Enlightenment; new ideas about the self, the imagination, experience, nature, and the supernatural; the poet in relation to society.

### LITR 310 THE NOVEL

Consideration of the novel as a reflection of changing conceptions of human consciousness, of changing attitudes toward society and of the individual's participation in community. Although the course may consider novels from any region or time period, it begins with a focus on British authors, including Swift or Defoe, Austen, Dickens, Eliot or Thackeray.

### LITR 311 AMERICAN LITERATURE

The study of major American writers primarily of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Topics may include the tension in the American experience between the religion and culture of the Puritans and emerging deist and agnostic trends growing in the wake of modern science and the Industrial Revolution; the development of a democratic sensibility; the tensions and fruitfulness generated by the meeting of the New World with the Old; the Southern Renaissance.

### LITR 412 TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE

The study of twentieth century literature, particularly of modernism, including developments from and reactions against it. The course covers such authors as James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, William Faulkner, J.R.R. Tolkien, Evelyn Waugh, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, and G.K. Chesterton.

### LITR 415 SPECIAL TOPICS

This course may be dedicated to particular themes, authors, genres or time periods appropriate to the advanced study of literature.

### LITR 490 SENIOR SEMINAR: LITERARY THEORY

An examination of the tradition of Western literary theory. Students will familiarize themselves with ancient, medieval, and modern approaches to literary criticism so as to prepare themselves for a senior thesis which will demand of them not only a mastery of one work of literature of their choosing but also an ability to converse with the relevant critical literature on their subject. The senior thesis project—including a prospectus, annotated bibliography, initial and final drafts—concludes with a public oral presentation.

# Typical Plan—Literature Major

## Freshman Year

<u>Fall Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Spring Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>
MATH 100, 120, 150, or 151	4	THEO 105 Sacred Scripture	4
LITR 103 Literary Tradition I	4	LITR 104 Literary Tradition II	4
HIST 101 Western Civ I	4	HIST 102 Western Civ II	4
LATN 101 or 103 Elem Latin	4	LATN 102 or 104 Inter Latin	4
MUSC 101 Gregorian Chant*	0		
Total	16	Total	16

\*may be taken in the Fall or Spring semester.

## Sophomore Year

<u>Fall Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Spring Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>
PHIL 205 Nature and Person	4	PHIL 206 Ethics	4
THEO 205 Sacred Doctrine	4	HIST/POLT 203 Amer Civ	4
Science I with Lab	4	Science II with Lab	4
LITR 205 Medieval Literature	4	LITR 206 Shakespeare	4
Second Arts Practicum*	0		0
Total	16	Total	16

\*may be taken in the Fall or Spring semester.

## Junior Year

<u>Fall Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Spring Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>
LITR 307 Early Modern Lit	4	LITR 309 Romanticism	4
LITR 311 American Literature	4	LITR 310 The Novel	4
General Elective	4	General Elective	4
General Elective	4	General Elective	4
Total	16	Total	16

## Senior Year

<u>Fall Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Spring Semester</u>	<u>Credits</u>
LITR 412 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Lit	4	LITR 490 Senior Seminar	4
Literature Elective	4	THEO 400 Living in Christ	4
General Elective	4	PHIL 400 Phil Perspectives	4
General Elective	4	General Elective	4
Total	16	Total	16